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THOUGHTS ON HOSPITAL SITES.

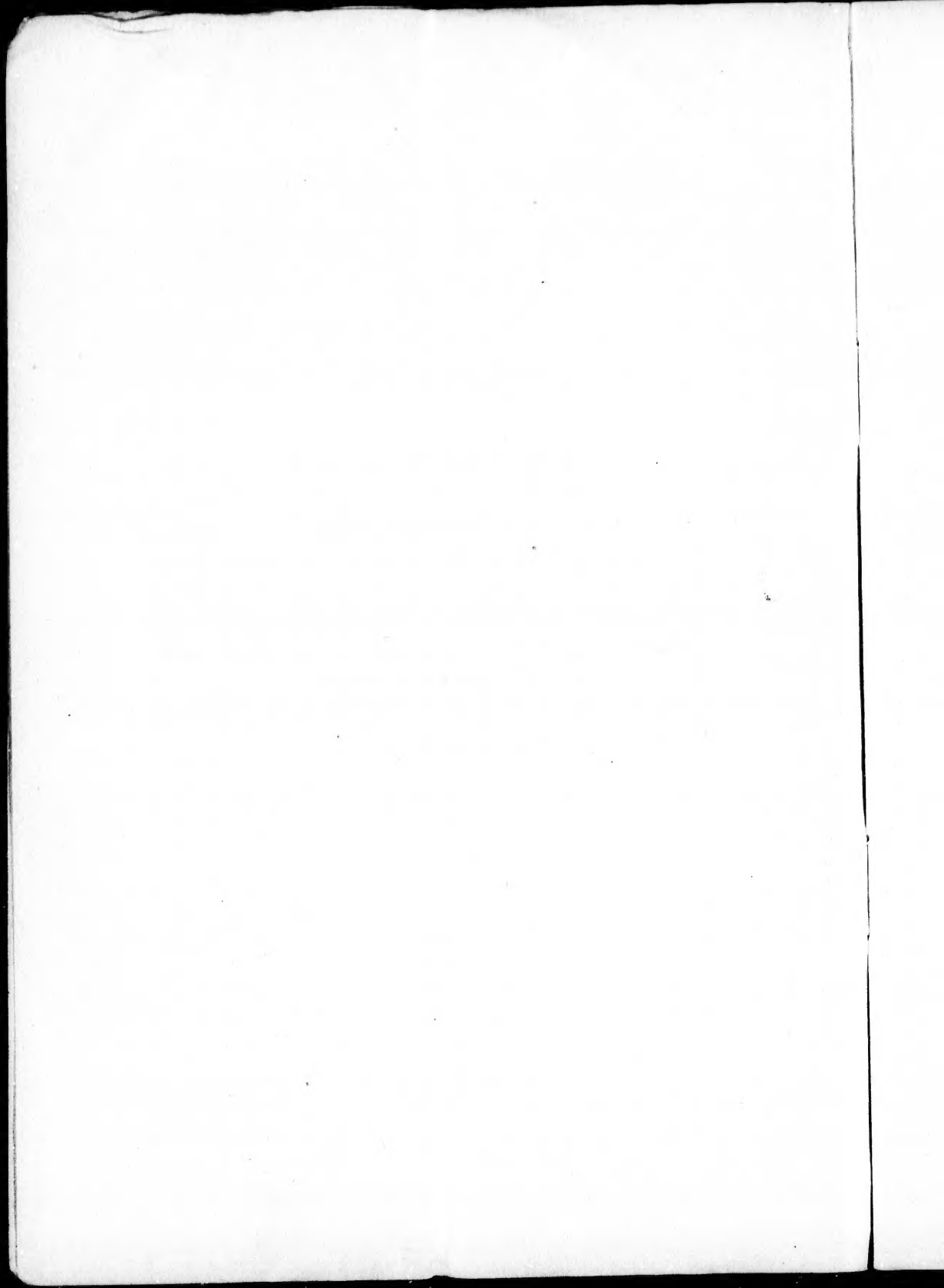
Montreal Gazette
- Thoughts

PREFATORY NOTE.

The following letters and editorial, first published in the *Montreal Gazette*, have been reprinted by request of friends of the union of the Montreal General and Royal Victoria Hospitals, and are respectfully commended to the favorable consideration of those interested in either or both of those institutions, and in the great public objects which they are intended to serve.

Copies have been placed in the hands of gentlemen connected with both hospitals.

Sept., 1889.



THOUGHTS ON HOSPITAL SITES.

(From Correspondence and Editorial of *Montreal Gazette*, July and Aug., 1889.)

THE NEW HOSPITAL SITE.

To the Editor of THE GAZETTE :

SIR,—Those who watch the discussion of public affairs from the standpoint of the ordinary citizen, who, while deeply interested, has no determining voice (except that of an occasional vote at a civic election), have been sometimes amused, sometimes grieved, in noticing the varied and discordant opinions of "experts" and "non-experts" on the above matter, so seriously concerning the most vital interests of the community.

One thing that strikes the average citizen, if at all an observant man, is the familiar fact that in the St. Lawrence valley, and especially in our cities, a very little elevation on any hillside secures an appreciable improvement of atmosphere as compared with that in the lower grounds, where the air is moist and warm in summer and loaded with noxious effluvia. In the lower part of the town one can scarcely open a window in the warm weather without being disagreeably reminded that the atmosphere is flat and destitute of ozone, besides being none of the purest. But if I can spare an hour to ascend the slope of Mount Royal, or to stroll in the Mountain park, I find a fresh and invigorating atmosphere—as much so as if I had gone a hundred miles into the country. I return feeling myself for the time a new man. If I were sick I would rather lie in a shanty on the mountain than occupy a palace in the lower part of the town. Some day, when

intelligence has advanced a little, there will be a sanitarium on the top of the mountain to which mothers may send their children, and where fresh air, pure water, and suitable food would remove their little summer ailments as effectually as a more expensive and troublesome journey to the country, and whence they may return to their homes instead of being carted off to the cemetery, where we provide over their little graves the mountain air and foliage that might, if administered in time, have helped to keep them alive. In the meantime our wealthy citizens appear to know this, and perch their handsome residences on the mountain. I can fancy that some of them, after enjoying such pure air, must appreciate the difference when they go down to the General Hospital to vote for keeping the poor man in his sickness in the warmest and most crowded part of Dorchester street, and out of the reach of the fresh breezes that would double his chances of recovery.

In view of all this, two liberal and large-hearted men have been found who have purchased one of the finest sites on the mountain—a much better site than either of them possesses for his own house, and have broken ground for the erection of a noble structure overlooking the city and away from its noxious exhalations, where the poor man may be tended in his sickness, and instead of pining amidst insalubrious surroundings may have all the advantages which the rich can command. The distance is, no doubt, a little greater, and the ascent somewhat steep, but the beautiful house is at the top, with the pure air of heaven instead of an atmosphere which no amount of carbolic or chlorine can render wholesome.

Let any one who doubts walk up University street to the site where the foundation is now being dug, and as he stands there let him note how his chest expands and he draws full and gratifying inspirations of pure air free from dust, disease germs, and the exhalations from yards and refuse heaps. Let him imagine a palace for the sick erected there—roomy, clean and airy, with fine surrounding grounds, provided with all that modern science can secure in the way of both sanitary and sanatory conditions, he will return thankful and content, and will be prepared to attach as much value to the learned prognostica-

tions of evil which have haunted the Royal Victoria Hospital as to the crow of the crow which flies across his path.

This is a part of one side of the question, but the venerable and honored General Hospital has something to say for itself and its site which should also be listened to.

THE OLD HOSPITAL SITE.

To the Editor of THE GAZETTE :

SIR,—In a previous communication something was said as to the advantages of the site of the Royal Victoria Hospital. Let us now turn to the old site, as it may be supposed to appear to the ordinary citizen.

The venerable and justly loved and respected General Hospital has, beyond the remembrance of the present generation of men, been an institution of which our city has good reason to be proud, and which has conferred inestimable benefits not only on our own citizens but also upon strangers. It has been emphatically the English hospital, managed on the principles which commend themselves to the practical good sense and sagacity of the English-speaking portion of our people, attracting to itself the best medical talent of Canada, and cared for and supported by the *élite* of our citizens, while it has extended its benefits to patients of every origin and creed. It has also been an essential helper to the great medical school which has given Montreal celebrity as a centre of professional education, as well as to the rivals which have recently endeavored to share its laurels. It has now the prestige of great reputation and enduring usefulness. Its present governors revere it as an object of solicitude to good men who have passed away, and generations of our citizens have looked to it as their resource in accident or sickness.

Such an institution necessarily commends itself to the good will of all men, and it has accordingly from time to time received many generous gifts, and few of our more wealthy citizens depart this life without remembering it in their wills, while there is no charity to which they are more willing to contribute. Any attempt to weaken or injure it would be sure to meet with public reprobation.

The site of the General hospital was selected at a time when the city of Montreal was almost limited to the ridge occupied by St. James and Notre Dame streets, when Craig street was in great part a swamp where a botanist might still collect marsh plants and where possibly an early sportsman might chance to have a shot at a snipe. Dorchester street was then nearly as far afield as the mountain park is now; and if the records of the time were carefully searched, it would no doubt be found that there were conservative people then who deprecated a location so distant from the heart of the city, and contrasted it with that of the older hospitals then near the river side. Medical doctors at that time considered the central part of St. James Street sufficiently remote from their patients, and probably regarded a drive to Dorchester street as something of the nature of a country visit. Since that time all the large populations occupying the western and upper parts of the city have grown up, and the General hospital is nearer to the river than to the rear of the city, while the part of the town surrounding it is becoming more and more occupied with shops, warehouses and factories, and it is being more and more enveloped in the increasing smoke of a manufacturing town.

The nuns in the meantime have wisely removed their great hospital to the upper part of the city, where it has ample space for extension, and for surrounding grounds, and where the existence of the park on its western side, that of the prevailing wind, ensures to it for all time the inestimable blessing of fresh air for its patients. In these ways it possesses inducements which commend themselves to the people, and which tend to counterbalance the great advantages in other respects offered by the General hospital. The latter also falls short of the accommodation necessary to meet the present demand. It is said that many patients have to be refused admission, and that the space both for patients and attendants is altogether inadequate. Donations and bequests in aid of extension, it is true, have been received, and plans for improved buildings have been prepared, but the more prudent and sagacious of the governors unquestionably are impressed with the feeling that it would be improvident to expend large sums of money on a site at present insufficient for the requirements of a good modern hospital, and which must yearly become, with the

extension of the city and the occupation of its central part for business purposes, more and more unsuitable. The governors of the hospital should, in the public interest, regard not the present merely, but the future, and note the upward and westward extension of trade, population, and our churches and public institutions. They should also bear in mind that within not many years the churches and public institutions, which are now moving up to western Dorchester and St. Catherine streets, will be as much "down town" as they were in St. James and Craig streets, and the time is coming when the Mountain park will be in the middle of the city. They should be prepared not to tie themselves to a piece of ground, however hallowed by old association, but should be ready to act with the same wise forethought which animated the original founders of the hospital, at a time when the present extension of Montreal would have been regarded as an impossibility.

In the circumstances, the foundation of the Royal Victoria hospital on a site further removed from the lower and less salubrious portion of the city, should be regarded by those interested in the General hospital as a welcome deliverance from a great and increasing difficulty; and if any arrangement can be secured whereby the two hospitals can work together and be mutually helpful, a great advantage to the public will be secured. Besides this, economy is an important object. So long as our French-Canadian fellow-citizens prefer the ecclesiastically managed hospitals, which are now being so severely repressed by their brethren beyond the sea, it is evident that the support and management of properly equipped general hospitals must devolve on the comparatively small English element, and this should not be burdened with a duplication of work and expense. It follows that amalgamation of some kind must commend itself to all prudent men, animated by a sincere regard for the public welfare; and the question really is how this may best be effected. To this end some concessions may be required in matters non-essential, while securing the permanence of a thoroughly efficient managing board representing all interests, and the retention of all that is desirable in the capabilities of both sites and of the buildings erected upon them.

Fortunately, while there is some natural hesitation and indis-

position to any precipitate action on the part of the governors of the General hospital, the majority of them are disposed fairly to weigh in the public interest any proposals laid before them; and the board of the Victoria hospital, on its part, has made advances and offered large concessions in aid of union. This, it is understood, is with the full concurrence of the generous founders of the new hospital; who by the purchase of enlarged space on the mountain side, at a great additional cost, have shown themselves disposed to consult in every way, even the prejudices of some of the citizens, while at the same time advancing much beyond our old ideas of the requirements of a great and growing city, of whose extension and prosperity in the future they have, from their own successful work in this direction, some reason to feel confident. When the agitation for the improvement of the parish schools of Scotland was in progress some years ago, an attempt was made to raise a popular cry to the effect that this was derogatory to the memory of Knox, the great founder of these schools. The reply was: "If Knox had been of your mind, there would have been neither reformation nor parish schools." Let us not allow unreasonable prepossessions with reference to the past to stand in the way of enlightened provision for the future. This, however, raises the question, how best the rival sites may be combined and used for the public benefit; and this may afford material for another communication.

MERITS AND USES OF THE TWO SITES.

To the Editor of the Gazette:

SIR,—If the facts and inferences stated in my previous letters have commended themselves to the good sense of those interested in the matter, the next question will be how, in view of these facts, we may best use the two sites now available in the interest of the public. The alternatives are: (1.) There may be two distinct hospitals, duplicating each other's work, and rivals for public support. (2.) The two hospitals may remain distinct, but with some alliance of a more or less intimate character, providing for common action in certain matters. (3.) There may be a complete amalgamation under a united board of

management, and with a single purse. The first of these is obviously likely to lead to much inconvenience and waste, while it will emphasize that disunion of which our groups of churches on Beaver Hall, St. Catherine street, and around the Windsor Hotel, are at present outward manifestations in the religious world, but which, happily, has as yet had small effect on our charitable and educational institutions. The second mode would be cumbrous and uncertain in its working, and, therefore, probably inefficient, while it might not be free from the rivalries and jealousies incident to separate managements. If the hospitals were purely business corporations, like banks or insurance companies, we might hope that in either of the above modes some healthy competition would arise beneficial to the public, but, unfortunately, this law of competition does not hold in benevolent enterprises in the same way as in those that are merely commercial. The third mode, that of amalgamation, therefore, remains as the most desirable if it can be attained.

To secure a united board, two concessions, one on the part of the Victoria Hospital and one on that of the General, seem necessary. The former must consent to enlarge its board of management so as to admit of an adequate representation of the latter, and must modify somewhat its conditions for the admission of life associates. The latter must come under the management of a united board on which its numerous governors will act not directly but through representatives. There would seem to be little difference of opinion as to the expediency of these concessions, the principal question raised being as to the amount of representation of each hospital in the first instance. It has been proposed to adjust this on the basis of a representation in proportion to the amount of property and income possessed by each hospital, which seems a not unfair arrangement. It is to be observed, however, that any difficulty on this point applies merely to the board as at first constituted, while the hospitals are yet separate. When once united, as their constituencies, or the great majority of them, consist of the same persons, no question can arise as to the one hospital as distinct from the other. The whole will then be one establishment, with two places for carrying on its business.

But then arises the question as to the business to be carried on

in each place. This must finally be a question for the united board, and any attempt to tie up its hands for all time would certainly be injurious. But some arrangement should be made for the initial distribution in a way that might remain undisturbed, so long as the present condition of the city and its hospital requirements continues.

Here common sense would dictate that, as the higher site is the more salubrious, and has the advantage of a change of air to a higher atmospheric stratum, it is best suited to continued and chronic cases and to convalescents, whether recovering from disease or from surgical operations. On the other hand, the lower site is more accessible to out-door patients from all the central and eastern parts of the city, and is more convenient for cases of accident and emergency. These considerations might easily form a basis for a primary division of work. The ordinary cases may be removed from the General to the Victoria, so soon as it can be ready, and the dispensary rooms, the arrangements for cases of accident and the accommodation for patients of that kind in the General may be improved and enlarged, so soon as it can be freed from the burden of the ordinary patients. In this way nothing of consequence would be duplicated, there would be an intelligible division of work, and the public would have a vastly better provision for its needs than at present. The question of contagious diseases, which practically should have a distinct provision amounting to a third hospital building, might be left for final decision to the united board, though the higher, more distant and more salubrious site should be secured for it if means will permit.

It may be objected that by this arrangement the function of the General hospital will be too much diminished. This, however, is a short-sighted view. The accommodation for dispensary service needs great enlargement and improvement, and is in any case a large, important and increasing department. The increase of the city and the growth of its factories and its shipping will unhappily rapidly augment the number of accidents, and improved provision for the immediate and effectual treatment of these would tend to determine them more and more to the hospital. It is not improbable that the provision of fifty beds, which has been estimated for this service, might, in a few years, have

to be increased by the united board to an hundred, while the beds in the Victoria hospital may be fully occupied. Another and most important consideration is that in both hospitals there would be an absence of that overcrowding and insufficiency of room and appliance which affects the General hospital at present. With ample space and improved means, the physicians, surgeons, nurses, and patients, would all be in more favorable conditions, and better results in every respect might be anticipated. In a growing city like Montreal all public institutions are more or less afflicted with a chronic insufficiency of means to meet the demands made upon them, and it is much to be desired that this should once for all be effectually cured in the case of our hospitals.

The writer of these letters makes no pretension to gifts of prophecy; but he can infer as to the future from what he has seen in the past. If the present opportunity is lost, it may pass away for ever, and those who, from the best intentions, obstruct a wholesome union, may live to regret their present action. The old hospital, with all its past prestige and popularity, will necessarily suffer most from a failure to unite. It is the law of our time that the new must increase, the old decrease. The General hospital may decay and fall into inferior hands, while the Victoria may find itself hampered and overburdened. It is to be hoped, however, that this failure will not occur, and that as a United General Victoria hospital, or perhaps in honor of the Queen it should be "Victoria General," the combined institutions will enter on a new and magnificent career of usefulness. In any case let us not incur the risk of being blamed by those who succeed us for throwing away, even in part, the benefits of one of the noblest benefactions of our time.

ON-LOOKER.

July 27, 1889.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS.

The attention of our readers has, doubtless, been directed to the letters of our correspondent on "Hospital Sites," which appeared in our issues of the 16th, 24th and 31st ult. The writer of those letters has pleaded with such conviction and convincingness for the consolidation of the General and the Victoria hospitals into one strong, serviceable institution, with its buildings on a site where the blessing of pure air might be had constantly and in abundance, that all reasonable people must acknowledge the force of his argument. Touching the union of the two institutions he puts the alternative succinctly and clearly before the public—"two distinct hospitals, duplicating each other's work, and rivals for public support." And of this alternative he says that it "is obviously likely to lead to much inconvenience and waste." Granting, then, that on the ground of correct business principles and common sense, the preference must be given to the plan of united action, on what terms should the two institutions agree to co-operate? "Onlooker" suggests two methods as possible. By one of these the two hospitals may remain distinct, but with some alliance of a more or less intimate character, providing for common action in certain matters. The alternative to this arrangement is "complete amalgamation under a united board of management and with a single purse." The former of these two schemes of union our correspondent characterizes as "cumbrous and uncertain in its workings, and, therefore, probably inefficient, while it might not be free from the rivalries and jealousies incident to separate managements." In fact, for the purposes of united action it would be found inadequate, and in practice would be disappointing. There remains the plan of complete amalgamation, and the first question to be answered is whether it can be effected. Our correspondent thinks that it can—the concessions necessary to that end being, on the part of the Victoria Hospital, an enlargement of its board and a modification of its terms of admitting life associates; and, on the part of the General Hospital, the consent of its Governors to a representative, instead of a direct control in the united board. The representation, it was suggested, should be adjusted on the

basis of each hospital's property and income; but as the result of the meetings of the committees, it is believed the Governors of the Victoria have consented that all the present Governors of the General shall be continued as associate Governors of the new institution, and that the qualifications for future Governors shall be lowered. Should these propositions be accepted we shall have one great hospital with two centres for conducting its operations.

How, then, should the work be divided between the old city and the new suburban or extramural establishment. Our correspondent devotes two of his letters to a consideration of the respective merits of the Dorchester street and the mountain site. Those who have read his comments must admit that his contrast between the air of the lower and that of the upper portion of the city is not a whit too emphatic. *Solvitur ambulando*, as our correspondent, with his twofold experience, suggests. To expend money on rebuilding on a site because it was chosen some seventy years ago by men whom all must revere, would be imitation in letter but not in spirit. Look at a picture of the General Hospital in its early years! It is in the fields. Between it and Craig street are men harvesting their grain. There is not a house in the neighborhood of it save its own outbuildings. Beyond, towards Sherbrooke street, are villas, surrounded by orchards and groves. It is a rural scene throughout. The grounds had been known as Marshall's Nursery before they were purchased by the Hon. Messrs. Richardson and McGillivray and Mr. Samuel Gerard. Every word that "Onlooker" has written on the choice of a site for a new hospital bears the impress of sound sense and merits the sanction of the hygienic expert. Wherever just such warnings as he utters have been disregarded, the consequence has been disastrous. On this point one of the greatest of modern authorities thus expresses himself:—"Fresh and pure air being a prime necessity, as well as a considerable amount of space of actual area in proportion to population, it would certainly appear to be better to place hospitals as much in the outskirts as is consistent with considerations of usefulness and convenience. In short, the best site would be in the fields; but, if that be impracticable, a large space—a sanitary zone—should be kept permanently free between the hospital and the surrounding build-

ings." The same writer says that, in most cases, it would be advantageous to dispose of the present buildings and sites of city hospitals and to retain only a receiving house in their stead.

Now this is just the view taken by our correspondent. He would keep the lower site (the General Hospital) for out-door patients and cases of accident and emergency as well as (with needed improvements) for a dispensary. The hospital occupying the higher and more salubrious ground would then be set apart for chronic cases and convalescents. As to the sufferers from contagious diseases, who would require isolation and the purest air available—the question of providing for them might be left to the consideration of the united board.

Such, in the brief outline, is our correspondent's plan for the solution of a problem of the highest interest to our city. That there may be objections to it, he is aware. Of these, the most weighty is that which touches the prestige, integrity and independence of that time-honored institution—the General Hospital. There is really, however, no conflict of interests. Those who are concerned for the welfare of the old are alike concerned for the future of the new hospital. Both have been created for the same benevolent objects—for the relief of the same classes of sufferers and in the service of the same community. It is essential, therefore, for the highest efficiency, contemplated by the founders of each of them, that they work together and not apart, without, however, any sacrifice of the name and fame of the older institution.